

## A CHRISTIAN AMERICA?

February 16, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

I praise the Lord for the liberties and blessings I have enjoyed for 46 years as an American citizen, but I do not agree with the view that the United States is a "Christian nation" or that the U.S. Constitution is based upon the Bible. It is true that many biblical principles were incorporated into the American government and legal system as originally conceived. It is true that many of the early leaders of our nation were committed to the authority of the Scriptures. (It is also true that many were not thus committed.) It is true that a biblical worldview permeated the early history of our nation. It is true that there probably could not be a more righteous and blessed government devised among men in this era.

But to say that America was once a "Christian nation" and that we need to recover America as a "Christian nation" is false and dangerous, in our estimation. Where in the Bible do we find the framework for a "Christian nation" in this era? The only "one nation under God" found in the Bible is Israel of old. It was a theocracy. This present era is the era of the churches. Secular government is mentioned in the New Testament, but there is no clear pattern given for its constitution, apart from the fact that it is to punish evil and encourage righteousness (Romans 13).

Was the American government ever truly Bible based? Consider this well-known statement from The Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

This is the philosophical foundation underlying the American government. Is it Scriptural? We think not. We love life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as much as the next son of Adam, but we do not believe this Declaration is based upon the Bible. Has God endowed men with the unalienable right to life? Not according to Ephesians 2:1, which says men outside of Christ are dead in trespasses and sins. If God has endowed men with the inalienable right to life, why does he strike men down with death? The answer, of course, is sin. The wages of sin is death. And since all men are sinners, no man has the inalienable right to life. That was forfeited in the Garden of Eden. What about liberty? Has God endowed men with the unalienable right to liberty? Not according to John 8:34 and 44, which says that men outside of Christ are servants of sin and the devil. What about happiness? Has God endowed men with the unalienable right to the pursuit of happiness? Not when we consider the fact that man's definition of happiness usually means worldly pleasure and the fulfillment of self-interest, and that the Bible condemns

such "happiness" (1 John 2:15). The Bible does not instruct men to "pursue happiness" but to pursue the Lord and His glory and righteousness (Ecc. 12:13).

If we are to build a Christian nation, what shall we use as the biblical pattern? Shall we use the law of Moses? If so, what portions? Shall we impose the dietary restrictions of the law of Moses? Shall we impose the sabbath laws and put people to death for gathering sticks and lighting fires on the sabbath? Shall we put witches and homosexuals and adulterers to death? All of this is required under the law of Moses.

It is this type of dispensational confusion which caused great confusion and injury in bygone days--the Salem witch hunts, the onerous laws which confused Sunday with the Sabbath, the intermingling of church and state, the wielding of the sword by the so-called church.

It is this same dispensational confusion which has resulted today in reconstructionism in all of its multitudinous forms.

It is not kingdom building time. It is not "Christian nation" building time. It is church time on God's calendar, and the church is not to be confused with the state. The church that is emphasized in the New Testament Scriptures is a local body of baptized believers organized after the apostolic pattern (Titus 1:5). It is church time, and the church's commission is not nation building but world evangelism.

Don't be confused and sidetracked by unscriptural goals and ideals. By all means, as an individual, vote and, as God leads, participate in the political process. Do what you can to help your nation be free and righteous, but don't make these activities the focus of the churches.

This world passeth away. Don't confuse present kingdoms with the coming Kingdom. That perfect nation which men are seeking in this world can only be built by God, and it is promised to those who trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Christian's hope and aspiration has nothing to do with the kingdoms of this world. We are pilgrims in this present world, and we look for a city to come, a heavenly city:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and CONFESSED THAT THEY WERE STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY, THAT IS, AN HEAVENLY: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for HE HATH PREPARED FOR THEM A CITY" (Hebrews 11:13-16).